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DESMODIUM CEPHALOTOIDES CRAIB (PAPILIONACEAE)—AN INTERESTING NEW RECORD FOR INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Desmodium cephalotoides Craib, a species of Thailand, closely allied to *D. triangulare* (Retz.) Merr. is recorded for the first time from India and Burma. A detailed description with illustrations is provided for facilitating easy identification. A short note on the taxonomic position is also added.

During one of the authors' (R. M. Dutta) floristic studies of Mizo Hills in Assam, the authors come across an interesting specimen of *Desmodium* DC., which on careful examination and critical study has turned out to be *D. cephalotoides* Craib, a species hitherto known only from Thailand. *D. cephalotoides* Craib is closely allied to *D. triangulare* (Retz.) Merr. but readily distinguishable from the latter by the larger flowers, broader bracts and bracteoles and in the acuminate middle calyx teeth of the lower lip.

Desmodium cephalotoides Craib in Kew Bull. 1912: 150, 1912 & Fl. Siam. Enum. 1: 405, 1928. *Dendrolobium cephalotoides* (Craib) Schindl. Fedde Repert. 20: 279, 1924.

Erect, perennial, fruticose herbs or under-shrubs. Branches triquetrous, densely villous-pubescent with appressed, grey-silky hairs, slightly flexuous when young. Leaves alternate, stipulate, pinnately 3-foliolate, 8-15 (-18) cm long; stipules, dry brown, caducous, lanceolate, sharply acute or acuminate, silky-hairy on the back, 1-1.2 cm long; petiole 3-quetrous, slightly grooved above, silky-pubescent, 2-3.5 (-4) cm long; leaflets shortly petioluled with 0.3-0.5 cm long petiolules, stipellate; stipels persistant, linear, subulate, silky-hairy, 0.5-0.7 (-0.8) cm long; lamina elliptic-ovate to lanceolate-oblong, cuneate to acute or subrotundate at the base, slightly oblique at the base of lateral ones, sharply acuminate or subacute, mucronate at the apex, entire or undulate, chartaceous, glabrous at maturity on both surfaces except appressed-pilose nerves beneath and midrib above; nerves depressed above and raised beneath, lateral nerves subparallel to the midrib, 10-17 (-18) pairs, connected beneath by transverse nervules, 5-12(-15) × 2-5(-6) cm. Inflorescence axillary, solitary, peduncled, silky-villous or pubescent umbels, which often form terminal leafless racemes or rarely panicles by the reduction of uppermost leaves; peduncles 3-quetrous, villous or pubescent with silky hairs, (0.5) 1-3.5 cm long. Flowers whitish, 1.2-1.3 cm long; pedicels unequal, slender, silky-pubescent, 0.4-0.5 (-0.6) cm long, bracts dry-brown, striated, deciduous, concave or not, ovate or oblong, abruptly acute or subacuminate, silky-hairy in the upper half on the back along the midrib and margins, 0.3-0.4 × 0.1-0.12 (-0.15) cm; bracteoles elliptic-oblong, abruptly acute or sharply acute, concave, silky-hairy in the upper half on the back, 0.3-0.4 (-0.45) × 0.18-0.2 cm; calyx campanulate, 0.55 (-0.06) cm long (incl. 0.25-0.03 cm long tube), glabrous within and appressed-silky without, cleft to the middle, upper 2-teeth connate into ovate-triangular. abruptly acute, 0.25-0.3 cm long lobe, hairy on the back, lower middle lobe the longest, lanceolate, acuminate, hairy (-0.45) cm long, lateral ones ovate-triangular, acute, 0.25-0.3 cm long; corolla white, 1.1-1.2 (-1.3) cm long; standard clawed, rounded to suborbicular, emarginate at the apex, wings clawed, oblanceolate to oblong, closely adhering to the keels and as long as the keels, keels hatch-shaped, obtuse; stamens monodelphous, 1.2-1.3 cm long; anthers linear 0.08-0.1 cm long; ovary sessile, pilose especially along the sutures, 0.5-0.3 cm long, style linear, incurved at the apex, glabrous, 1.2-1.25 cm long, stigma capitate. Young pods 4-5 jointed, densely appressed-silky-pubescent.

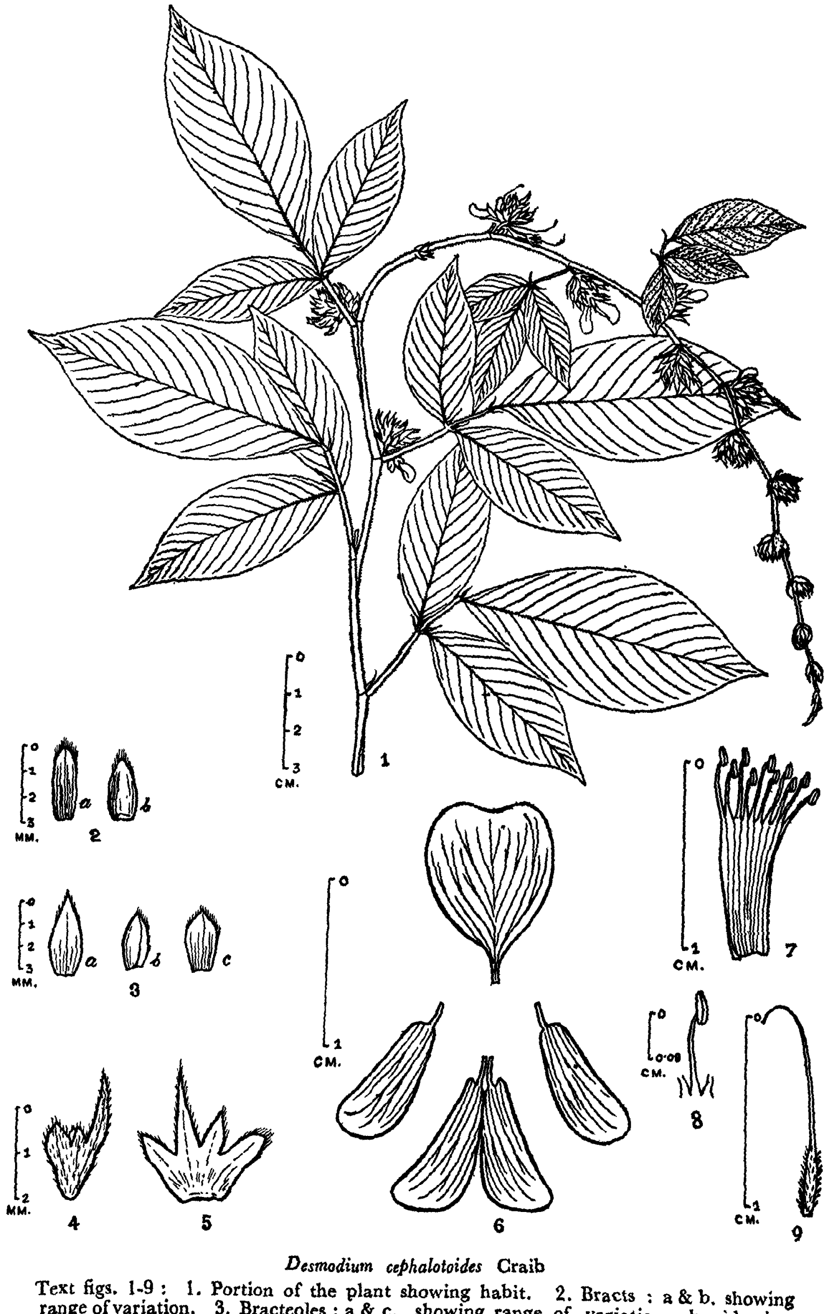
Type: Kerr 2022 (not seen).

Flowers: June-July. *Fruits:* Aug.-Oct.

Specimens examined: India: Assam: Lushai hills, Aijal, *Godfrey* 509 (CAL); *Pardy* 16 (CAL); Thalthlang to South Vanlaiphai, *Dutta* 34021 (ASSAM). Burma: Upper Burma, Shan, *King's Collector* 645 (CAL); *Abdul Huk* s.n. (CAL); Upper Chindwin district, *J. H. Lace* 4178 (CAL).

Distribution: India, Burma and Thailand; confined to Mizo hills of Assam in India.

Notes: Specimens from Assam have much longer peduncles than those of Burma. The bracts and bracteoles in Burmese specimens are much longer and sharply acute than in Assam specimens. The longer peduncles of the umbels, racemose or paniculate inflorescences and shorter bracts and bracteoles



Desmodium cephalotoides Craib

Text figs. 1-9 : 1. Portion of the plant showing habit. 2. Bracts : a & b. showing range of variation. 3. Bracteoles : a & c. showing range of variation. b. side view. 4. Calyx. 5. Calyx split open. 6. Corolla. 7. Staminal tube split open. 8. Single stamen. 9. Pistil.

in Assam specimens may prove to be good to recognise an infraspecific taxon, but there are several intermediates connecting these two forms of specimens. Further, the presence of solitary 4-foliolate leaf and paniculate inflorescence formed by the production of secondary umbels from the main peduncles in one of the specimens from Assam (*Dutta* 34021) may perhaps due to monstrousity rather than characters of the genotypic nature.

Some specimens of *Desmodium triangulare* (Retz.) Merr. from China (Yunnan, Sunnao Mts., *Henry* 12107, 12107 A) have bracts very similar to those of *D. cephalotoides* Craib, but differ from the latter in having linear bracteoles. As such the differences between the two species further narrow down and the only reliable character appears to be the nature of bracteoles. Therefore, it seems that *D. cephalotoides* Craib may well be recognised as a variety of *D. triangulare* (Retz.) Merr.

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